

Virginia Department of Health
Tdap Vaccine Requirement for Sixth Graders
Fact Sheet
August 31, 2006

- Beginning July 1, 2006, a new Virginia law requires children entering the sixth grade to receive a Tdap booster, if at least five years have passed since their last tetanus vaccine.
- The Tdap vaccine protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. Tetanus, also called lockjaw, causes painful tightening of muscles throughout the body. It can lead to "locking" of the jaw, making it difficult for the sick person to open his or her mouth or swallow. Diphtheria is a serious disease that causes a thick covering in the back of the throat and can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and even death. Pertussis, also called whooping cough, causes coughing spells so bad that it is often hard to eat, drink or breathe.
- Children typically receive this vaccine at infancy. However, over time their immunity wanes. As a result, in recent years there have been increases in pertussis outbreaks among adolescents. The Tdap vaccine boosts immunity in persons 10 years of age and older and is aimed at helping to eliminate pertussis outbreaks.
- Local health departments will provide Tdap vaccine free of charge to rising sixth graders, and several will be holding school-based vaccination clinics. Contact your local health department for specific information. Students who have not been vaccinated prior to the first day of school may be excluded until vaccine is received. Local school divisions may opt to allow unvaccinated students to attend classes until the vaccine is received or up to 90 calendar days after the first day of school before exclusion (conditional enrollment).
- The Virginia Department of Health urges parents to make sure their children's immunizations are up-to-date. Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only protect vaccinated individuals from potentially serious diseases, they also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of disease.
- For more information on Tdap and other vaccines, contact your health care provider or local health department, or visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nip>.